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Preview '80

Bush's Theme: Time for Insider in White House

Businessman, lawmaker, spy chief, diplomat, party boss—he's been all those and now is fighting for the role of GOP presidential nominee.

After three years of a self-proclaimed "outsider" President, George Bush is banking that American voters are ready for an experienced hand in the White House.

The 55-year-old Bush is offering knowledge gained under fire in key government posts at home and abroad as his main asset in an admittedly uphill campaign for the Republican presidential nomination.

Bush's statement that "I believe I've had more national and international experience in more areas" than any other candidate is hard to dispute. His job résumé reads: Member of Congress, Ambassador to the United Nations, second U.S. envoy to the People's Republic of China, director of the Central Intelligence Agency and national chairman of the Republican Party. Campaign advertising pointedly ticks off each of those roles in promoting Bush as "a President we won't have to train."

Kudos for capability. Amid Ford's "cabinet massacre" in late 1975, Bush returned to the U.S. to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Professionals in the agency were wary of his political background. But, in the words of one career intelligence officer: "He did his job without fanfare and with some skill. Some think Carter made a mistake by not permitting him to stay on, despite their party differences."

Where Bush Stands On the Issues

Inflation: "The economy is in the worst mess since the Great Depression." A balanced budget is a must in the first 100 days of a Bush administration, with a "veto club" held over Congress if necessary. Growth of federal spending and federal regulations should be halted.

Tax cut: Taxes should be cut by 20 billion dollars in 1980—half for individuals and half for business—with emphasis on encouraging saving and investment. Future taxes should be indexed to offset inflation.

Energy: Prices of oil and natural gas should be decontrolled, starting immediately. "Our ability to obtain crude oil from the Persian Gulf is going to hinge upon our willingness to bolster our defenses and strengthen our alliances."

Cuba: "We ought to get those Russian troops out of Cuba." Cuban policy has been part of overall vacillation by the Carter administration that makes the U.S. look doubtful and insecure while the Soviets move forward.

SALT II treaty: Carter's version of the arms-limitation pact is "seriously defective." Higher defense spending should not be a trade-off for ratification. Steps to produce a manned bomber and the cruise and MX missiles as well as to beef up the Navy would "send a signal to Moscow."

Intelligence: It is a mistake to trust the Soviets. As director of the Central Intelligence Agency, "my concept of leadership was rebuilding morale and strengthening intelligence while seeing to it that the rights of all Americans are guaranteed."

China: The Carter administration "blindly accepted" Peking's terms for improving relations without demanding a peaceful solution for Taiwan.

Education: Creating the Department of Education will "only add red tape and regulations to the process of education" and invite more federal controls in local schools.

Draft: A national registration of young people may be necessary before consideration of resuming the draft.